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ABSTRACT

This report examines the institutionalization of library services for distance education students at four educational institutions in British Columbia, and provides an overview of the status of distance library services in British Columbia by comparing those services with distance library service provided elsewhere in Canada. The development and current status of distance library services at the University of British Columbia (UBC), the University of Victoria (UVic), Simon Fraser University (SFU), and the Open Learning Institute (OLI) are described, and the common distance library service elements of the four institutions are compared, including core collections, special telephone lines, requests for specific material, reference queries, interlibrary loans, computer literature searches, advertisement of services, bibliographic instruction, support staff, and charges for service. This comparison reveals that library services are an important component of university extension and distance education in British Columbia. The 31 replies received in a national survey of 42 university libraries, however, indicate that few libraries elsewhere in Canada employ a model of distance library service similar to the one used in British Columbia. It is noted that the growing body of literature on distance library services will help promote more awareness of these services and facilitate the development of a closer working relationship between distance education personnel and librarians. (KM)

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THE EVOLUTION OF LIBRARY SERVICES FOR OFF-CAMPUS AND DISTANCE EDUCATION STUDENTS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

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The purpose of this paper is to draw attention to a neglected area of university-level library service in Canada: service to off-campus and distance education students. The paper describes how the universities in one province, British Columbia, have recognized the need for library support for their distance students and have adapted similar methodologies for providing that support. The services offered to B.C. distance students are summarized and a brief comparison is made with services provided at university libraries outside the province to form an overview of the current state of distance library services in Canada.

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Are library services an important component of university extension and distance education? In British Columbia, the answer to this question is a definite "yes". The three universities in the province, the University of British Columbia, the University of Victoria, and Simon Fraser University all have committed themselves to providing a broad range of library services for their off-campus and distance education students. In addition, the Open Learning Institute (O.L.I.), which delivers courses entirely by distance education methods, has contracted with Simon Fraser University to supply library material to O.L.I. students on demand.

The institutionalization of these "distance" library services is a fairly recent phenomenon in B.C. While the three universities have been active in offering off-campus and distance education credit courses for over ten years, it is only since 1979 that distance students have been able to access library material on an individual basis from the "home" institution through established procedures. In the following sections, the background and current status of each of the four B.C. distance library services will be briefly outlined. The elements of service common to all four institutions will then be identified and discussed. Finally, the model of service offered in British Columbia will be put into a national perspective with reference to off-campus library services offered elsewhere in Canada.

The Open Learning Institute

Distance library services really began in B.C. with the establishment of the provincial Open Learning Institute in 1979. In the mid-1970's, several investigative groups were commissioned by the provincial Ministry of Education to identify the unfulfilled educational needs of the people of

British Columbia, especially those living in non-metropolitan areas. The reports of these groups, together with that of the Interior University Programs Board in the Spring of 1978, indicated the need for a new institution to deliver educational courses to adults via distance education methods at all levels: high school completion; career, technical and vocational; university degree. The Institute was formally established in 1979 and the first students enrolled in September of that year. During the first year of operation, O.L.I. offered seven courses. In 1985, the Institute's offerings totaled 159 courses.

The provision of library services to O.L.I. students received attention early in the planning process, resulting in the decision that the Institute would not establish a central library for its students[1]. This decision was largely based on the assumption that prospective students from all parts of the province would be interested in O.L.I.'s distance education delivery mode, and therefore a central library at the administrative headquarters in the Vancouver area would not be accessible to large numbers of students. Since it was realized that most local libraries would not be able to support the students' needs for material relevant to the O.L.I. curricula, the Institute's initial intent was to provide everything in the course package that the students would be likely to need for successful completion of the course. The assumption that this procedure would eliminate the need for provision of additional library support was realistic for studies in the areas of Adult Basic Education and Career, Technical and Vocational Education, but not for studies in the division of University Programs. As a means of responding to this need, the O.L.I. Director of University Programs and the University Librarian of Simon Fraser University

devised an experimental model of library service which included a reference librarian, employed by the Institute, to supply library material to O.L.I. students from S.F.U.'s library[2]. This librarian was to be located at S.F.U. and given full access to the collection and other necessary facilities. Students would contact the librarian by means of a toll-free telephone line and request material and information for their courses. Books and articles would be mailed directly to the students with all operating costs borne by the Institute.

This proposal was put into operation for a trial period in September 1979, to coincide with the first course offerings. At the end of the experimental period, the project was evaluated and found to be satisfactory to all concerned. The service was then institutionalized and has operated unchanged on a full-time basis ever since, except that service now is extended to Adult Basic Education and Career, Technical and Vocational students.

Simon Fraser University

Off-campus offerings at Simon Fraser University can be traced back to 1971 when the Division of Continuing Education was established. The Division scheduled a small number of off-campus credit courses in the Lower Mainland and at Kamloops and Vernon, in response to specific needs of students during its first years of operation. In the Fall of 1975, a major off-campus program of degree completion was begun in Kelowna in cooperation with Okanagan College. In contrast to ad hoc extension efforts which had characterized off-campus services both nationally and provincially, the Kelowna Program assured students of orderly degree completion at the third

and fourth year levels in Psychology and Biological Sciences[3]. Also in 1975, the Directed Independent Study Course (DISC) program at S.F.U. was introduced. In its first year of operation, four university correspondence courses were offered. Since then, the program has expanded to include approximately 130 courses.

Library services for S.F.U.'s off-campus and distance education courses were provided on an ad hoc basis until 1979. The most recognizable area of support was the provision of "core collections" to the sites where off-campus courses were taught. In 1979, the University Librarian at S.F.U. was instrumental in the establishment of the Open Learning Institute's library service. Due to the growing enrollments in the DISC program and standards set by the University for courses in this program, it was decided that S.F.U. would experiment with a library service for distance students based on the model created for O.L.I. In the Fall of 1979, an External Services Librarian was hired and S.F.U.'s TELEBOOK service was introduced. This service was more or less identical at first to the O.L.I. service. TELEBOOK represented the library's toll-free telephone line for distance education students. Books and articles were mailed directly to students in any location on request. Reference services were provided. All operating charges were covered by the University.

After its first year of operation, the service was evaluated and the consensus was that TELEBOOK fulfilled a necessary and worthwhile function for the University. Since then, it has operated on a full-time basis and is now recognized as an established component of the University Library. Originally begun to accommodate correspondence students, the TELEBOOK library service is now available to all S.F.U. off-campus students,

including students in S.F.U. downtown Vancouver courses and in Education site courses, off-campus graduate students, Criminology Practicum students and, recently, students in S.F.U.'s prison course programs. TELEBOOK does not restrict its services to the province of British Columbia, but also provides library materials to S.F.U. students in other provinces, Washington state and, most recently, to graduate students in Papua-New Guinea.

The University of Victoria

The history of off-campus courses at the University of Victoria dates back to the early 1960's when UVic was still a college. These off-campus courses were selective responses to the course needs of students who had not completed academic programs begun in Victoria, rather than part of a general extension initiative. Most off-campus students were registered in the Faculty of Education.

Through the 1970's, UVic's extension activities expanded and, with financial assistance from the provincial government, more off-campus courses were added to the curriculum. All off-campus offerings were coordinated and funded through a central campus agency called, in its later days, the Division of University Extension. The Faculty of Education continued to sponsor the largest number of out-of-town courses, but courses in the professional fields of Social Work, Child Care, Nursing, and Public Administration appeared in response to needs assessments. The University also offered courses leading to a general Arts degree at selected areas on Vancouver Island. In most cases, off-campus courses were at the third and fourth year level as part of degree completion programs. In 1984/85, the University offered approximately 150 off-campus credit courses.

In the late 1970's, the Faculty of Education's offerings expanded to include off-campus graduate programs. It was at this stage that the question of enhanced library support was raised. As was the case at Simon Fraser University, the Library's involvement until then had been primarily in form of supplying "core collections" on request to the sites where off-campus courses were held. No special services were offered to individual students at a distance. Some faculty members in Education became concerned that their graduate programs could not successfully continue without an increased level of library support. The holdings in the regional colleges were not adequate for these programs and the core collections were limited in their usefulness since they could not cover all the specialized areas in which the graduate students would be working. After much consideration, discussion, and rejection of proposals such as placing a part-time librarian in the field, the Library and the Division of University Extension agreed to experiment with a telephone answering machine as a mechanism for receiving requests for library material from off-campus graduate students. For a trial period in the Winter term of 1980, INFOLINE, as the service was called, was made available to the students in the Education Graduate programs and to students in a selected number of undergraduate courses. In many ways this experimental service was similar to the library services established at the Open Learning Institute and Simon Fraser University in the previous fall. While a librarian was not appointed initially, other components of the service were present: a toll-free telephone line, direct mailing of books, articles, and micromaterial to the students' homes, and reference services. All operating costs were covered by the Division of University Extension.

As was the case with the other two library services, faculty and student response to INFOLINE was very positive, encouraging the Library and the Extension Division to continue the service. In the Summer of 1980, an Extension Librarian was appointed and INFOLINE was made available to all off-campus students for the 1980/81 academic year. A further evaluation was conducted at the end of that period and the value of the service was confirmed. Since then, INFOLINE has continued to operate on a full-time basis.

The University of British Columbia

U.B.C. is the oldest of the three B.C. universities and has been active in off-campus and distance education for over forty years. The history of U.B.C.'s extension program has been well recorded by other authors[4] and will not be summarized in this article. Responsibility for off-campus and distance education courses at U.B.C. is decentralized. Approximately 60 correspondence courses, some with video components, are organized by an office called Guided Independent Study (GIS). Individual faculties such as Education offer credit and non-credit face-to-face courses at off-campus sites. In 1984/85, the off-campus credit courses totaled over 30. In addition to students enrolled in GIS or off-campus courses, the off-campus student body includes people who have completed their course work but are still registered to complete their theses.

Library support for U.B.C.'s off-campus students has existed in a limited form since 1936 when the Department of Extension was established. Initially, the Extension Library served members of the general public as well as students enrolled in independent studies or group activities offered by the Extension Department. The Library was staffed by a librarian who acted as readers' advisor. As public library services developed throughout the province, this general service was dismantled. By the 1960s, it was limited to two functions: sending books held in the Extension Library to correspondence students in response to requests received by mail, and providing collections of Extension Library books to off-campus sites to support face-to-face courses.

As new developments in distance education occurred in the province in the late 1970s, the U.B.C. Library recognized the need to expand the Extension Library service. The existence of a separate collection which was unavailable to campus library users ensured that students at a distance had access to supplementary reading materials chosen by instructors. However, these students were limited in further research because they did not have access to the collection and services available in the traditional campus setting. In addition, there was no systematic library support for students who were finishing their degree requirements at a distance without being enrolled in courses. In 1982, students in off-campus face-to-face courses were permitted to phone collect for books and articles from the Main Library. This was an experimental step toward the comprehensive service the U.B.C. Library wished to develop. Finally, in early 1984, funds earmarked for distance education enabled the Library to hire a librarian to develop the present service, "Dial-a-Book".

Dial-a-Book is similar to the services in operation at the other three B.C. institutions. Registered U.B.C. students living anywhere in Canada or the United States and not taking courses on campus, may call collect to request specific titles or for assistance in anything from finding a fact to obtaining an on-line bibliographic subject search. Books, microforms and photocopies of journal articles are mailed free of charge and interlibrary loans are available. The operation is funded mainly by monies allotted to the University for its distance education programs by the Open University Consortium of B.C., but the Library contributes the salary of a half-time library assistant and a portion of the collection budget.

The separate collection has continued to serve its original purpose. It contains approximately 3,700 uncatalogued items which are in continuous demand for correspondence courses or are used in off-campus collections for an entire term. Correspondence courses are organized by the Guided Independent Study office which works with the librarian to ensure that reading materials recommended in course manuals are available. Since off-campus courses are not organized through a central body, the provision of core collections and the development of the Extension collection for that purpose requires contact with individual instructors.

In its first two years of operation, Dial-a-Book has begun to play a significant role in distance education at U.B.C. In off-campus courses, instructors are beginning to create research assignments comparable to those required of on-campus undergraduates. Correspondence students still mainly request specific titles recommended in course manuals because most assignments require nothing more. However, now that access to the Library has expanded, authors of new courses are broadening the scope of assignments.

Comparison of Services

For the purposes of comparison and contrast, the components of the four B.C. distance library services can be classified into ten general categories.

1) Core Collections:

This component of a distance library service is basic to those institutions which offer traditional face-to-face off-campus courses. A core collection is a selection of books and articles which is provided by the Library for use at the course site. Only the University of British Columbia Library and the University of Victoria Library are currently involved in this service. Simon Fraser University Library did supply core collections at one time, but materials for S.F.U. site courses are now provided by the department offering the course and the TELEBOOK service supplements those resources, on request, for individual students. U.B.C.'s core collections are provided entirely from the Extension Library. UVic's collections are extracted from the main library. Duplicate copies of monographs are purchased on a selective basis with special funding to replace UVic's unique items which are sent off-campus. Any titles out in a core collection and not duplicated in the main library are subject to recall from the off-campus site if required for an on-campus user. At both universities, core collections are generated from reading lists supplied to the Library by faculty in consulation with the extension librarian.

2) Special Telephone Line:

The focal point of all four library services in B.C. is a special telephone line to the library for off-campus and distance education students to use to request material and information for their courses. The telephone is the off-campus student's link to the library and serves as a substitute for the student's being able to walk into the building in person and select his or her own material. In order to connote the special purpose of the telephone lines, three out of the four library services have distinctive names: TELEBOOK (S.F.U.), INFOLINE (UVic), DIAL-A-BOOK (U.B.C.).

The four telephone services have the following features in common: students are advised through publicity to call collect; the lines operate 24 hours a day; telephone answering machines are used to accept collect calls and record information. The use of the answering machines varies amongst the four services. At S.F.U. and O.L.I., the librarians talk directly to their users and note the information and references required. If the librarians are not available to answer a call, their answering machines ask the caller to leave his/her name and phone number and the calls are returned later. At UVic, callers are requested to leave their entire list of requests on the answering machine tape. These calls are transcribed by support staff each day. The librarian at UVic only returns calls when requested to do so or when there is some problem with the information given. The U.B.C. Extension Librarian uses a combination approach, answering calls in person when she is in her office, and, on the answering machine message, giving her callers a choice of being called back or leaving their requests on the tape to be transcribed later.

3) Specific Material:

All four B.C. library services accept requests for specific books and articles from off-campus students. The loan periods for material vary from institution to institution. Recalls are placed for material in use by on-campus borrowers. Substitutes are sometimes sent at the librarian's discretion. Material is sent by mail to the address given by the student.

4) Reference Queries:

Reference questions and requests for literature searches are accepted by the four librarians. At each library, on request, a selection of material on the student's topic is gathered together and sent out in the same way as specifically requested titles.

5) Interlibrary Loans:

When required, each library service will initiate interlibrary loan requests on behalf of the students for items not held by the home library. Off-campus and distance education students in B.C. no longer have to rely on their local libraries to provide this service for their course needs. Within British Columbia, members of the Interlibrary Loan Network have an agreement that I.L.L. material will be mailed directly by the lending institution to the off-campus student's home address. The library service which initiated the request takes responsibility for ensuring that I.L.L. items are returned in due course to the lending library.

6) Computer Literature Searches:

At the four institutions, the librarians use on-line computer services on a selective basis to facilitate subject searches. Computer literature searches are also conducted on request for individual students.

7) Advertisement of Services:

All four institutions ensure that their off-campus library services are well advertised. Handouts and leaflets are distributed to the students by the campus agencies responsible for offering the courses. Where applicable, services are listed in course manuals and in general student and faculty handbooks.

8) Bibliographic Instruction:

The Extension Librarian at the University of Victoria meets with students in the off-campus graduate programs and provides information on how to use the INFOLINE service effectively. In addition, duplicate sets of periodical indexes and abstracts are placed on site for certain graduate programs. The Extension Librarian provides instruction on the use of this reference material during his class visit. For selected other off-campus courses, the UVic librarian conducts information sessions by teleconferencing and videotape.

The Open Learning Institute Librarian provides bibliographic instruction to individual students by mail as required. Copies of references from periodical indexes and abstracts are sent to students on a selective basis and, where appropriate, students are referred to local libraries for material or information.

9) Support Staff:

The three university library services have part-time or sessional support staff to assist in locating and sending out material.

10) Charges for Service:

At present, with the exception of modest fees for on-line literature searches, none of the four institutions charge their students for distance library services. The basic services are provided free as compensation to the off-campus student for being unable to use the resources of the library in person.

A National Perspective

In 1984, the four B.C. distance librarians, working as a group, sent letters to university libraries across Canada to inquire about library services offered to off-campus and distance education students at their institutions. Forty-two letters were sent and thirty-one replies were received. Not all respondents provided complete information about their services but, based on the replies received to the letters of inquiry, few university libraries in Canada employ a model of distance library service similar to that present in British Columbia. The universities which are currently most involved in providing library services to their distance students are Athabasca University, Brandon University, Brock University, Lakehead University, Mount Saint Vincent University, Trent University, the University of Manitoba and the University of Ottawa. Laurentian University Library has also been active in this area as indicated in one of the few Canadian contributions to the library literature on off-campus library

services[5]. In addition to these institutions, the following universities identified two or more areas in which library support is offered to their off-campus courses and students: Acadia University, Memorial University of Newfoundland, Queen's University, the University of Alberta, the University of Calgary, the University of Lethbridge, the University of Prince Edward Island, the University of Saskatchewan, the University of Western Ontario, the University of Windsor and York University.

For the purposes of comparison, three libraries amongst the respondents reported that they offer a special telephone line for distance students similar to the lines in operation in B.C. One library reported that collect calls were accepted from distance students and four libraries had calls relayed to them from other campus offices. Sixteen libraries supply core collections on request to the sites of off-campus courses. Seventeen libraries (some of which are not involved with core collections) accept requests for specific titles to be sent directly to out-of-town students and fifteen libraries will conduct subject searches and answer reference questions for their students at a distance. On-line searches are conducted for distance students at twelve libraries. At twelve institutions, library services for off-campus and distance education students are advertised in handouts, guidebooks, and in other literature. Six libraries have a librarian who has either part-time or full-time responsibilities for distance library services. Amongst the libraries which do provide individualized services, seven identified charges, other than computer search fees, which are passed on to the students. A detailed analysis of this data has been published in the proceedings of the second Off-campus Library Services Conference held in Knoxville, Tennessee, in April 1985[6].

With the exception of the articles by Mount and Turple[7] and Orton and Wiseman[8], information on the development of distance library services in Canada has been quite meager until recently. The attention being focused on off-campus library services in the United States is resulting in a new body of Canadian literature in this area. This literature is developing from Canadian participation in the Off-Campus Library Services Conferences sponsored by Central Michigan University Library. Three conferences have been held to date, the first in October 1982, in St. Louis, Missouri; the second in April 1985, in Knoxville, Tennessee; and the third in October 1986, in Reno, Nevada. While no Canadians participated in the first conference, representatives from Lakehead University [9] in Ontario and the University of Victoria [10] in British Columbia, presented papers on Canadian topics at the second conference in 1985. The third conference in 1986 included papers presented by librarians from Athabasca University[11] and the University of Lethbridge[12] in Alberta and the University of Victoria[13] in British Columbia.

The new body of literature on distance library services is helping to promote more awareness about this often neglected area of librarianship. With this awareness, librarians will be in a better position to recognize the needs of the learner at a distance and the ways in which libraries can fulfill some of those needs. In addition, as distance education personnel become more aware of how libraries can contribute to the planning and delivery of courses, they will be more inclined to seek the services of librarians and a closer working relationship between the two bodies is likely to develop. This relationship has the potential of encouraging the development of more specialized library outreach services similar to the

ones in operation in British Columbia. It is hoped that the model of distance library services used by the four institutions in B.C. will serve as an example of how academic libraries can play an active role in enhancing the quality of off-campus and distance education for the adult learner in this country.

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